Griffith ap Einion (c. 1382–c. 1450)

Origin and Family

Born bef. 1382. Died c. 1450.

Father: Einion ap Griffith (c. 1360–c. 1397)
Mother: Tangwystl verch Rhydderch
Spouse: Lowrie verch Tudor ap Griffith Vychan

Children[1]**:**

1. Griffith Vaughan, of Cors-y-Gedol, a firm adherent of the Lancastrian cause, and one of the defenders of Harlech Castle, under his valiant cousin, David ap Ievan ap Einion, 1461. Griffith was an ancestor of the Vaughans of Cors-y-Gedol.
2. Ellis ap Griffith (c. 1427–1489)
3. Tudor ap Griffith, whose heirs general were the Lloyds of Bodidris, represented by Edward, 2nd Lord Mostyn.
4. Catherine, married Howell ap Griffith, of Crogen-yn-Edeirnion.
5. Efa, married Madoc ap Griffith.

Griffith ap Einion is a key figure in the lineage of the House of Yale, and the last of the family from Cors-y-Gedol. He was able to navigate the challenging political landscape of the 15th century by maintaining his standing with the English King as a royal official (Woodward and Raglot)[1] while simultaneously marrying the sole heiress of the rebellious Welsh House of Glyndyfrdwy.[1] Through this marriage, Griffith connected himself and his descendants to the royal Welsh bloodline and the 10,000-acre Barony of Gwyddelwern[2], laying the foundation for the family's future seat at Plas-yn-Yale.

When Griffith married Lowrie in 1401, Wales was in full rebellion, led by Owain Glyndŵr. While Lowrie held a significantly higher dynastic status as a descendant of the Princes of Powys and the niece of Owain Glyndŵr, her family's rebellion had left her inheritance in great legal and political peril. Griffith ap Einion, though of lower royal rank, provided the political stability and royal favor she desperately needed. As Raglot and Woodward for the English Crown, Griffith acted as a legal shield, using his standing with the King to protect Lowrie's claim to the Barony of Gwyddelwern from permanent forfeiture.[9]

The Barony of Gwyddelwern was in a rugged and mountainous area, providing ample resources for grazing sheep and timber, which were the primary drivers of wealth in medieval Wales. At about 15 square miles, it was a substantial territory—perhaps two or three times the size of a standard gentry estate in 15th-century Wales. It is by far the largest single estate in the Yale ancestral line, dwarfing Cors-y-Gedol, Plas-yn-Yale, and any American holdings.

The combination of rents paid from the Barony farms, income as Woodwarden and Raglot, and income from Cors-y-Gedol made Griffith ap Einion one of the wealthiest landholders in North Wales at the time.

From Rodney Horace Yale[1]: "At the division of his father's lands he received Cors-y-Gedol as his portion and he held the office of Woodward of the Commote of Ardydwy, Merioneth, at Michaelmas, 1400, also 2 and 3 Henry V (1415-1416). He married Lowrie, daughter and heir of Tudor ap Griffith Vychan, Lord of Gwyddelwern, Edeirnion, and niece (and in her issue sole heir)

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of his brother Owan ap Griffith Vychan, Lord of Glyndyfrdwy, the memorable Owain Glyndwr, representative of the dynasties of North Wales, South Wales, and Powys."

The genealogy presented above is often repeated elsewhere, but a lesser known variation may be found in Miscellanea Genealogica et Heraldica: "Griffith ap Einion of Cors-y-Gedol, Esq, had two wives, but it is uncertain which was the first. He married Laurea, daughter of Tudor Vaughan, brother of the celebrated Owain Glyndwr, and Mari Llwyd daughter of Ievan Llwyd ap Grono ap Kenric ap Cynvelin. Griffith ap Einion, at Michalemas 1400, held on lease the office of Woodwarden of the Commote or Ardydwry for a term of two years; and at Michaelmas 1415 he held on lease the office of Raglot of the same commote. He, by his wife Laurea, in whose right he was Lord of Gwyddelwern, one of the baronies of Edeirnion, was ancestor of the Vaughans of Cors-y-Gedol."[2] Lowrie is also confirmed as the ancestor of the Yale line.[1]

The actual birth year of Gruffydd ap Einion is not known, but he served as the Woodward of the commote of Ardudwy in Merionethshire in 1400. As he needed to be at least 18 years old to hold that position, he was born before 1382.

Occupation and Property

The position of Raglot, or governor, was the highest administrative and judicial position a Welshman could hope to obtain, and it was generally only available to local lords if no Englishman applied for the position. Both the position of Raglot and Woodwarden were very lucrative. The term "held in lease" meant that Griffith ap Einion actually paid an annual fee for the privilege of holding the position, but was compensated many times over by the fines and levies he was permitted to collect.[3]

Lowrie, the wife of Griffith ap Einion, had as her uncle the famous Owain Glyndwr. As mentioned previously, he led a revolt against the English in 1400-1415. He is one of the main subjects of Shakespeare's Play, King Henry IV (although Shakespeare referred to him as Owen Glendower). Today, Owain Glyndwr is considered the most famous of all medieval Welsh heroes.[4]

This interesting article appears in Archaeologica Cambrensis in 1853[5]

> *"Of the descendants, if any, of Owain Glyndwr himself, beyond his children, I am not aware that there is any authentic pedigree, or other satisfactory proof; and it seems his issue was limited to a daughter and heir, Alice, wife of Sir John Scudamore, Knight. There were no children of Alice's marriage with Scudamore ; and assuming the failure of her issue, and also the extinction of Owen's other offspring, the representation of the three dynasties — "the long line of our old royalty" — reverted to that of his only brother, Tudor ap Griffith Vychan, who is stated to have been killed under Owain's banner at the battle of Mynydd Pwll-Melyn, near Grosmont, Monmouthshire, fought 11th March, 1405.*
>
> *Tudor ap Griffith Vychan's daughter and heir, Lowry [Lady] of Gwyddelwern in Edeirnion, "una Baron, de Edurnyon," became the wife of* ***Griffith ap Einion*** *of Cors-y-Gedol, living 1400 and 1415; and from this marriage descend the eminent Merionethshire house of Cors-y-Gedol and its derivative branches, the Yales of Plas-yn-Yale, county Denbigh, and the Rogers-Wynns of Bryntangor in the same county; the former represented by the Lloyds of Plymog, and the latter by the Hughes' of Gwerclas in Edeirnion, county Merioneth, Lords of Kymmer-yn-Edeirnion, and Barons of Edeirnion.*
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> *These families, co-representatives of the three Cambrian dynasties, all quarter, with the arms of South Wales and North Wales, the ensigns I have referred to as the hereditary bearings of the Lords of Glyndwrdwy. Independently of the adoption of these ensigns in the Welsh MSS. in the British Museum, College of Heralds, and other depositories, it may*

be mentioned that they are quartered in an ancient shield of the Vaughans of Corsygedol, suspended in the hall of Cors-y-Gedol, one of the finest and most picturesque mansions in the Principality, — and that they appear in the splendid emblazoned Genealogy of the House of Gwerclas, compiled, in 1650, by Robert Vaughan, Esq., of Hengwrt, the Camden and Dugdale united of Wales."[5]

According to *Annals and Antiquities of the Counties and County Families of Wales*[7] Cors-y-Gedol continued to play a role in Welsh and English history: "In 1401 the owner of Cors-y-Gedol (Griffith ap Einion) married Lawra, daughter and heiress of Tudor Vaughan, own brother to Owain Glyndŵr, who, it is said, was frequently concealed at Cors-y-Gedol. In 1483 Jasper Tudor, Earl of Pembroke, left Cors-y-Gedol to bring from France his nephew, Henry, Earl of Richmond, afterwards Henry VII. It is said with what truth it is hard to determine that Charles II was at Cors-y-Gedol during his wanderings, and slept in the state bed still preserved there. The date 1575 is over the chimney in the hall of the present house, which is thought, however, to be of rather earlier date; it was probably built in the time of Henry VIII."[7]

It would have been very risky for Griffith ap Einion to conceal his uncle-in-law Owain Glyndŵr, the King's greatest Welsh enemy, while at the same time serving as the King's Woodwarden.

Griffith ap Einion is the sixth and last ancestor of the Yales from Cors-y-Gedol. This 200 year period began with Osborn Wyddel in the thirteenth century. Upon the death of Griffith ap Einion, the estate passed to his eldest son, Griffith Vaughan. The house was entirely rebuilt in 1576 with many additions to the outbuildings and gardens over the centuries. His descendant, Richard Vaughan (1693-1734) is reported to have made improvements to the house and gardens, and his son William commissioned an extensive and detailed survey of the estate in 1764. This is the earliest known depiction of the house and gardens and shows the estate much as it exists today, with the layout of the gardens and outbuildings having been achieved.[6]

Cors-y-Gedol Entrance

The Gatehouse

The Old Wing

"The gate-house is after a design by Inigo Jones, a kinsman of the Vaughans. The modern additions to the house were made by the late Hugh Ker Cokburne, already mentioned, who also placed there the fine collection of paintings of the Italian, Spanish, Flemish, English, and French schools, and the rare ancient and modern china collections which give to Cors-y-Gedol an artistic interest unrivaled in Wales."[7]

A footnote of interest is that according to the Complete Works of Charles Darwin Online, in the 1820's Charles Darwin often visited Cors-y-Gedol as he enjoyed fly fishing in the lakes surrounding the mansion. The poet William Wordsworth was also a frequent visitor, as was Lord Alfred Tennyson.[8]

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End of Life

Griffith ap Einion's year of death is unknown, but the approximate birth year of his second child Ellis ap Griffith is 1427. As he had 3 more children after Ellis, he died sometime after 1430. From the *Cors-y-Gedol Hall Hydro Scheme,*[6] "Upon the death of Griffith ap Einion in the mid fifteenth century, the estate passed to his eldest son, Griffith Vaughan", so it's reasonable to assume he died c. 1450, about 68 years old.

Research Notes

Online Genealogy References:
WikiTree ID: Ab_Einion-8
FamilySearch ID: LD95-YCQ

Further Reading:

- Yale, Max Brian. *Guide to the Max Brian Yale Genealogical Collection*. *Max Brian Yale Genealogical Collection.* 2025
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2. Joseph Howard, Miscellanea Genealogica et Heraldica, 1874

3. Williams-Jones, Keith. "The Merioneth Lay Subsidy Roll 1292-3", Cardiff, Wales: University of Wales Press, 1976

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6. Cooke, Richard. "Cors-y-Gedol Hall Hydro Scheme, Tal-y-bont, Gwynedd.", 2014 Report No. 0023.

7. Nicholas, Thomas. Annals and Antiquities of the Counties and County Families of Wales, London, England: J and W Rider, 1872

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9. Lloyd, Jacob Youde William. The History of the Princes, the Lords Marcher, and the Ancient Nobility of Powys Fadog. Vol. 6. London: T. Richards, 1887. (See pages 1-15 regarding the Barony of Gwyddelwern and the descent of the Yale family).

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